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Letter dated 1 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing on behalf of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT Group).[1] The Group, comprising 27 Member States, from across every regional group, believes that accountability, coherence and transparency are the principles that make every organization stronger and more efficient and that those principles, if followed, create wider inclusiveness and ownership that will have a positive impact on the overall performance of every conceivable international body. Therefore, the ACT Group would like to engage actively in promoting increased transparency and inclusiveness in working methods and election processes at the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council.

Having that in mind I should like to, in my capacity as Coordinator of the ACT Group, draw your attention to proposals by the Group on the appointment of the next Secretary-General of the United Nations, to be decided in 2016.

The ACT Group believes that a more rigorous process and more transparency would be welcomed in selecting the next chief of the Organization, to represent all of us. We believe that transparent and inclusive decision-making has much greater potential for the best possible outcome than a concealed process with exclusive participation. We think that in the United Nations system, there are a number of processes that need to be scrutinized in order to make them more open. Therefore we have formulated proposals on the selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General, which are attached to the present letter (see annex).

In our proposal we acknowledge the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly regarding the appointment process. The principle according to which the candidatures for the post of Secretary-General of the United Nations are first discussed within the Security Council and then recommended to the General Assembly could, in our view, remain unchanged.

[1] The members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT Group) are: Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Ghana, Hungary, Ireland, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Portugal, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay.

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The ACT Group recommends starting the nomination process in an open and transparent manner, with a joint letter by the Presidents of the Security Council and of the General Assembly, inviting Member States to present nominations for the post of Secretary-General. The joint letter should fix a deadline for the submission of nominations. In our view, in order to ensure sufficient time for all the considerations, now is the time to start the process. We believe that at the conclusion of the nomination process, a document should be issued, jointly by the Security Council and the General Assembly, containing the names and nationalities of the candidates, in alphabetical order, with the curricula vitae in an annex. The document should also outline the ensuing steps and indicative timelines in order to make the process more structured and foreseeable.

We would value your contribution in initiating the discussions within the Security Council on the above-mentioned proposals and, together with the President of the General Assembly, in making the nomination process more structured, with an established timeline. A similar letter is being sent by the ACT Group to the President of the General Assembly for his consideration.

I kindly ask you to circulate the present letter and its annex to the members of the Security Council and to issue it as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Paul **Seger**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 1 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General, in 2016

A call for ACTion

The second five-year term of Ban Ki-moon as Secretary-General will come to an end on 31 December 2016. The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT Group) calls for increased transparency and inclusiveness and a more rigorous process in selecting the next chief of the Organization. The ACT Group acknowledges and fully respects the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations[a] and is cognizant of relevant resolutions of the General Assembly regarding the appointment process. The principle according to which the candidatures for the post of Secretary-General are first discussed within the Security Council and then recommended to the General Assembly should remain unchanged. That being said, the provisions in the Charter leave much room for improvement in the transparency and inclusiveness of the process.

For the purpose of enhancing the working methods of the Security Council, the ACT Group calls for the practical implementation of the following proposals for improving the appointment process, which shall be conveyed to the President of the General Assembly as well as to the President of the Security Council:

Nomination of candidates and timeline for the selection process

- Official call for nominations: in order to start the process in an open and transparent manner, the ACT Group recommends that a joint letter be sent by the Presidents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council, inviting Member States to present nominations for the post of Secretary-General. In order to be valid, a candidature will have to be supported by at least one Member State. The joint letter should fix a deadline for the submission of nominations (for example, by the end of 2015).
- The joint letter should strongly encourage Member States to nominate qualified female candidates.
- List of candidates: at the conclusion of the nomination process, a document should be issued, jointly by the General Assembly and the Security Council, containing the names and nationalities of the candidates, in alphabetical order, with the curricula vitae in an annex. The document should also outline the ensuing steps and indicative timelines leading up to the decision by the General Assembly, in order to make the process more structured and predictable.

Selection process

- Active role of the General Assembly: the General Assembly should play a more active role in the selection process, in accordance with the Charter. We

[a] Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations stipulates that the Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

also call for the full implementation of relevant resolutions,[b] keeping in mind the rules of procedure, including rule 141, while acknowledging existing relevant General Assembly practices.

- Public hearings: the ACT Group calls for widening the scope of consultations beyond the members of the Security Council and for considering the views of all Member States. The Group encourages the formal presentation of candidatures for the position in such a manner as to allow sufficient time for interaction with Member States. The wider membership could also benefit from open hearings, such as interactive dialogues organized by the President of the General Assembly, to engage with nominees and have an input in the process.

- Consultations: ACT Group also endorses more transparency within the Security Council. Hearings and Arria Formula meetings should be held by the Security Council with shortlisted candidates, so that all members of the Council, both permanent and elected, can make an informed decision as to which candidate to support.

- Security Council briefing: the ACT Group encourages public briefings by the Security Council regarding the development of the nomination process, in order for the wider membership to be updated on the process.

- The selection process should be finalized as early as possible, preferably three months prior to the assumption of office by the incoming Secretary-General.

Appointment

- The identification and appointment of the best candidate for the post should be in line with best practices regarding high-level appointments of executive heads of the United Nations and other international organizations.

- Due regard should be given to equal and fair geographical distribution, through rotation, and to gender balance, through giving preference to equally qualified female candidates.

Term of office

- The ACT Group sees merit in discussing the term of office of the Secretary-General.

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[b] Including General Assembly resolutions 11 (I) of 24 January 1946, 51/241 of 31 July 1997, 60/286 of 8 September 2006, in particular paragraphs 17 to 22 of the annex thereto, and 64/301 of 13 September 2010.